



File Code: 2610

Date: May 31, 2011

Mr. Mark Lere
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 6th Avenue
Helena, MT 59620

Dear

I am writing in support of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks' (FWP) efforts to secure funding to repair and modify the Chadbourne Diversion Dam. The success of our agencies' mutual efforts to ensure the persistence of Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) in the Shields River drainage in part rely on this dam functioning as a barrier to prevent the invasion of non-native fish into the watershed above Chadbourne Dam. Repair of the structure also ensures a reliable water supply for agriculture which maintains the economic viability of that industry. Conserving YCT in the Shields River watershed is also consistent with the mission of the Shields Valley Watershed Group. I am pleased to see that support for this project comes from a diverse array of stakeholders and interest groups, including the Lower Shields Canal Company, Montana Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, Park County Conservation District, Shields Valley Watershed Group, Trout Unlimited, and DNRC. The Gallatin National Forest (GNF) strongly supports the Future Fisheries Improvement proposal for FWP's use in ensuring the long-term persistence of Chadbourne Diversion Dam as a fisheries conservation tool.

The GNF and FWP are signatories with other federal, state, and non-governmental organizations to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for cutthroat trout conservation in Montana. The MOU directs signatories to work together to secure existing YCT populations by removing threats to their continued persistence. Range-wide, invasion of non-native fish was identified by the MOU as the largest threat to the persistence of YCT. Furthermore, this threat to YCT persistence in the Shields River drainage was specifically identified in a YCT conservation strategy developed for this watershed by FWP, GNF, and other partners, as was securing the Chadbourne Diversion Dam as a barrier. As such, we fully support repairing and modifying the dam as proposed by FWP.

If you have any questions regarding our support for this project, please contact Clint Sestrich, GNF East Zone Fish Biologist (406-823-6067), or Bruce Roberts, acting GNF Forest Fisheries Biologist (406-522-2544).

Sincerely,

RON J. ARCHULETA
District Ranger



